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the kingdom, and its common knowledge constitutes the first and foremost of these common beliefs and forms of cultural 'commonness' which supply the background of political unity. I have found the consciousness of this tradition developed most strongly in the river area and among the Beni, that is, in the area that marks what I have called the 'core' of the expanding kingdom. It is totally absent to-day, and most probably has always been absent, among the Dibo, who have never formed part of the old kingdom, and among some of the Nupe-ized groups (such as the 'Gbari slaves') which, absorbed into Nupe in more recent times, have remained culturally 'Outside Peoples'. The distribution of the 'mythical charter' of Nupe kingdom and the boundaries of the kingdom itself coincide.

To go on with the tradition of Tsoede. For sixty years he reigned in Gbara; he died, 120 years old, on one of his military expeditions to the north, near Gbagede. Some of his belongings, two stirrups and his sword, are still kept as almost sacred treasure by the people of Gbagede (who are Kamberi, not Nupe). At the time of Tsoede's death the kingdom of Nupe was expanding towards the north, and his four sons who succeeded him as kings of Nupe, one after the other, are said to have founded Mokwa, in the north-west corner of Nupe, as their temporary capital. Another of his descendants, Abdu Waliyi, founded the capital Jima, on the Kaduna opposite Gbara.[1] The fifteenth king after Tsoede, Jibiri, who reigned according to Nupe genealogies about 1770, was the first Nupe king to become Mohammedan. He was deposed by his son and died in exile, in Kutigi, where his grave can still be seen. Under *Etsu* Ma'azû, the nineteenth king of Nupe, Nupe kingdom reached its greatest power. During his reign, about 1810, Mallam Dendo, also called Manko, 'Great Mallam', a Fulani from Kebbi who was destined to change the whole fate of Nupe kingdom, is said to have first appeared in Nupe country as an itinerant preacher, diviner, and seller of charms. With *Etsu* Ma'azû we also reach, for the first time, in this account, the plane of 'objective history'; his death is recorded by one of the first European visitors to Nupe as having occurred in 1818.[2]

THE FULANI CONQUEST

We enter now a period of Nupe history which is illuminated by the light of 'real' history. It is described with many details in the written records of Nupe court historians, the earliest of whom was a certain Abduramani, a Mohammedan scholar who seems to have lived in Rabá in the early days of Fulani rule. It was during this period, too, that European travellers first penetrated into Nupe.[3]

[1] In addition to the historical capitals of the kingdom, Gbara, Mokwa, Jima, and finally Rabá (see below), the Nupe records also mention certain other places at which the Nupe kings are said to have resided temporarily at various times, viz. Etsû, Jengi, and Yeti.

[2] Journal of Rev. J. F. Schoen and Samuel Crowther, *Expedition up the Niger*, 1842, p. 191.

[3] I owe to the kindness of the Administration the opportunity of having been able to consult unpublished Government records, compiled by the first officers who were serving in this area; I must acknowledge specially the very complete 'Notes on Nupe History', by Major Burdon (1902).

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From that time Nupe history is linked indissolubly with the fate of the Fulani conquerors of Nigeria who had made themselves rulers of the main Hausa states in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The history of the Fulani *Jihad* has often been described,[1] so I need say only a few words. The Fulani established their suzerainty over Northern Nigeria in a loosely organized, decentralized dual empire, the western part under the supremacy of the Sarkin Musulmi of Sokoto, and the eastern under the Emir of Gwandu. Nupe kingdom fell to Gwandu's share. The Fulani conquest was achieved in two phases and by two methods: a gradual infiltration of the foreign country by Mohammedan Fulani, and then, ultimately, a military conquest. The same policy was adopted in Nupe. Mallam Dendo was one of those Mohammedan preachers and emissaries to 'heathen countries' who was to collect an ever-increasing group of followers as the nucleus of future conquest. His followers seem to have included men of all stations: cattle Fulani to whom in their semi-nomadic life Nupe had become a second home; Fulani and Hausa mercenary soldiers who took service in the Nupe armies; merchants from northern towns; and Mohammedan priests and missionaries; I estimated their number at the time of the conquest at not more than 1,000 or 1,500. When Mallam Dendo became strong enough to venture the decisive blow, he applied to the Emir of Gwandu, his overlord, for military help and for a *tuta*, flag, which signified his official recognition as a leader and accepted feudal chief of the Fulani Empire.

The opportunity for the Fulani to make themselves masters of the country soon came. Almost immediately after *Etsu* Ma'azū's death internal trouble broke out. The claim of Maazu's son Jimada, the legitimate heir to the throne, was disputed by his father's brother's son, Majiya II. The details of this feud are not clear. According to some accounts Jimada was Majiya's father's sister's son, who had been appointed regent for the boy-king Majiya; later, when Majiya grew up and demanded his kingdom, Jimada refused. Other accounts make the two claimants sons of elder and younger brother respectively, namely, of *Etsu* Ma'azū (the nineteenth king of Nupe) and *Etsu* Ma[illegible] (the twenty-first king of Nupe). Majiya claimed the throne by the right of general Nupe succession, being the elder brother's eldest son; Jima[illegible], however, was regarded as the legitimate heir according to the ancient Nupe rules of royal inheritance which decreed that the son 'born in the purple' should become king.[2] Whatever the origin of this dynastic feud, it led to a temporary division of Nupe kingdom into a western and eastern half: Jimada reigned in Gbara, the ancient capital of Nupe, and Majiya built himself a capital in Rabá, on the Niger. Majiya gained the friendship of Mallam Dendo and the Fulani group in Nupe, and with them on his side he became by far the more powerful, and soon snatched the other half of

[1] See A. C. Burns, *History of Nigeria*, Oxford, 1929; A. W. Bovill, *Caravans of the Old Sahara*, Oxford, 1933; C. K. Meek, *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, Oxford, 1925, i, pp. 98–102.

[2] In Africa this rule of inheritance is unique, and cannot, according to Nupe tradition, have applied to Tsoede himself and his four sons who succeeded him. All informants insisted that it became, at some unspecified period, the rule of succession in the Nupe dynasty.

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●175 Nupe kingdom from his rival. He defeated Jimada in the war, killed him at Ragada, near Jengi, and thus made himself the undisputed king of Nupe, about 1820. Idirisu, Jimada's son, fled with the rest of his followers to Laboži, and later across the river, to Eggã, where he stayed, an exile and fugitive, powerless against Majiya's army. Nupe was not to remain at peace for long. Majiya's gratitude to the Fulani who had helped him to defeat his rival soon changed to jealousy and fear. He turned against them, only to be himself defeated, and to lose his throne to his sometime friends and allies.

This is the story that is told in Nupe of the rise of the Fulani and of the final struggle for the Nupe throne. Majiya, as king of Nupe, had learned of the fame of Manko as a preacher and Mohammedan scholar and diviner. He invited him to his court and installed him there in the influential position of his private counsellor and diviner. He trusted his prophecies and his advice and was convinced that his victories in the field were due to Mallam Dendo's *asiri* (lit. 'secret', that is supernatural powers); he rewarded him magnificently, gave him money, slaves, horses. He took Mallam Dendo's youngest son Masaba into his house as his foster-son, as the Nupe do with sons of friends. More and more of Mallam Dendo's kin and fellow countrymen came to Rabá to take service under him or under the king, till at last Manko's power and influence were more than equal to that of the king himself. Majiya now thought it high time to rid himself of the dangerous rival. He drove Mallam Dendo and all his followers from Rabá, and chased them from his territory, across the Niger, into Ilorin country.

Here another Fulani emissary, Mallam Alimi, had already been established for some time as king over the Yoruba of Ilorin. He now gave protection to the Fulani refugees from Nupe. But *Etsu* Majiya, desirous of uprooting for ever the power of his dangerous vassals, decided to attack Ilorin and to conquer this southern stronghold of the Fulani invaders. He attacked Ilorin with 4,000 horsemen and 10,000 foot-soldiers. He marched for two days from Rabá to Ilorin, and halted his army at the gates of the town. The victory seemed his. This war of Majiya against the Fulani of Ilorin, as it is told in Nupe, is a magnificent epic. There were five Fulani emissaries in Ilorin at that time: Mallam Baba, who had fled with Dendo from Rabá and later became the first Emir of Agaie; Mallam Dendo himself; Mallam Musa, another fugitive from Rabá; Mallam Maliki, who had resided in another Nupe town, Lafiagi, and had been driven from there by Majiya; and Mallam Alimi, the Emir of Ilorin. Dendo was the youngest of the five, but his keen intelligence made him at once their leader. He first sent word to Idirisu, Jimada's exiled son, asking for his support in this fight against Majiya, the murderer of his father. Then Dendo prepared his most powerful *asiri*. Two brave men were sent out at night to steal into the enemy's camp and to bring back some earth. Dendo dug a large pit close to the town wall. He put the earth into this pit, and covered its mouth with grass. On a Friday morning he entered the pit, taking with him fourteen dates. He stayed there till the hour of evening prayer, but what he did in the pit, what secret magic he performed, no one knows.

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When he reappeared, he called again the two men who had brought the earth the previous night, and ordered them to scatter it by night all round the town walls. Next morning Majiya attacked. A thick mist had fallen over the country. Majiya's troops were unable to move in the mist. Then a sand-storm sprang up, blinding men and horses. The horses bolted, and Majiya's cavalry, placed (in accordance with Nupe military principles) behind the infantry, trampled down their own men. When the small army of Ilorin sallied forth from the gates of the town, it met an enemy already half defeated. Majiya was beaten, he fled across the Niger, back to the protected Rabá, with only 1,000 horses and 1,070 men left of his huge army. This was not the end. Idirisu and his followers joined forces with Mallam Dendo. Together they pursued Majiya's troops, marching their men up the Niger as far as Gbajibo, fifty miles north of Rabá, where they were able to cross the river unmolested. Here Mallam Dendo is said to have used a clever ruse: for a week he collected horse-dung, and then threw it into the water; drifting down the river it reached Rabá; and the Nupe, who had hardly recovered from their defeat at Ilorin, thought that an enormous army of horsemen was approaching Rabá and had already crossed the river. Majiya fled into the interior, to Zuguma, leaving Rabá unprotected, an easy prey to the Fulani army.

Mallam Dendo repaid Idirisu's help badly. He let him remain a puppet king of Nupe exiled to Eggá,[1] while he installed himself in the capital Rabá as the real ruler. Dendo and his people collected taxes and tribute; they had the command of the larger part of the army; they began to dispense justice, and generally to direct the affairs of the kingdom. A revolt of Idirisu ended in his being killed by Mallam Dendo's troops, whereupon Dendo, 'true Fulani' (say Nupe informants), turned back to Majiya, previously his enemy, offering him friendship and recognition as king of Nupe—another puppet king, in far-away little Zuguma. Two years after this unification of Nupe, in 1833, the year when Oldfield and Lander visited Rabá, Mallam Dendo died.[2] He left four sons (two having died before their father) and two daughters, the sons being Abdu Gboya, Usman Zaki, Mamudu Gwogi, and Masaba (Mama Saba), the daughters Gogo Sabaci and Gogo Wodiko.

During Mallam Dendo's lifetime Mallam Baba, one of his companions on the flight to Ilorin, set out to conquer a kingdom for himself. Following Dendo's advice, he took twelve men, crossed three rivers, travelling by night and hiding by day from the Nupe troops who might intercept his party. The small troop raided the country, and growing as it marched, finally reached Agaie, which Mallam Baba made the capital of another (much smaller) Fulani Emirate in Nupe country. Revolts of the Nupe of that part, and attacks of Majiya, whose sovereignty had extended over Agaie, were in the end defeated, and soon Mallam Baba could enlarge his small kingdom by new victories: over part of the Bataci tribe on the river; over Kacha, which subsequently fell to Bida;

[1] In 1833 Oldfield, whose ship, the *Quorra*, was anchoring off Eggá, met there the exiled Idirisu (Laird and Oldfield, op. cit. ii, pp. 38–9).
[2] Laird and Oldfield, op. cit. ii, p. 76.

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● 175 and over the Gbari of Payi, which became later the independent Emirate (again under a Fulani) of Lapai.

Mallam Dendo is said to have advised his sons not to seek, after his death, official secular power, but to remain what he had been: the uncrowned king, nominally only an emissary of Islam and the spiritual head of the country. But the division into real and nominal, spiritual and secular rulership did not work. Two years after Majiya's death (1835?) Tsado, his son, like him puppet king of Nupe in Zuguma, revolted again against the hated Fulani. He was defeated and killed by one of the Fulani generals near Egbako. His son, Dzurugi (The Red One), returned to Zuguma. But now Usman Zaki, the second son of Dendo, himself adopted the title *Etsu* Nupe, demanding the ancient regalia from the exiled shadow king in Zuguma and making Rabá again the official capital of the kingdom. From this time the legitimate dynasty of Nupe abandoned all legal claim to the rulership over the country, and the new Fulani dynasty assumed full powers. Of the other descendants of Mallam Dendo, Abdu Gboya, Usman Zaki's elder brother, whose leanings were more scholarly than warlike, became *Alkali* (judge) of the kingdom, and Mamudu Gwogi, Usman's younger brother, *Shaba*, or Heir Presumptive.

From this time the history of Nupe kingdom is the history of constant intrigues, fights, wars, and rebellions. Fights between the sons of Mallam Dendo, wars against other tribes and against factions in Nupe, and rebellions of the descendants of the old Nupe dynasty, who did not give up hope of recovering the throne from the Fulani, or rebellions of powerful generals of mercenary troops who claimed the rulership for themselves, and often rebellions of both, one using the other as a pawn in this game for the throne of Nupe. Masaba, the ambitious and most popular youngest son of Mallam Dendo, born of a Nupe mother and educated at the court of the Nupe *Etsu* Majiya, claimed the throne on the grounds that he was a real Nupe and not, like Usman Zaki, a Fulani by descent. He won the support of Tsado in Zuguma and Idirisu in Eggá, the two shadow kings of Nupe, and finally even the support of the Emir of Gwandu, the spiritual head of the Eastern Fulani Empire. Masaba led two revolts against Usman Zaki, the first from Rabá, shortly after the latter had assumed power, and the second, from exile in Lade, south of the Niger, in 1841.[1] It was successful and forced Usman Zaki to leave Nupe kingdom together with Umaru, the son of his eldest brother Majigi, and to return to the home of his ancestors, Gwandu. Masaba became king of Nupe.

Let me enumerate the main facts in the involved history of Fulani-Nupe, with its revolts, its constant bloodshed, and its fratricidal wars. During Masaba's reign Nupe kingdom grew extensively. Masaba, residing first in Lade and later in Rabá, conquered the Kamuku in the north, the Gbari in the east, and the Kakanda in the south; he entrenched himself firmly on the Yoruba side of the Niger, snatching the country from other Fulani chiefs who had gained a foothold there. A revolt of one of his mercenary generals, the Bornu general Umar Bahaushe, drove

[1] Schoen-Crowther, op. cit., p. 161.

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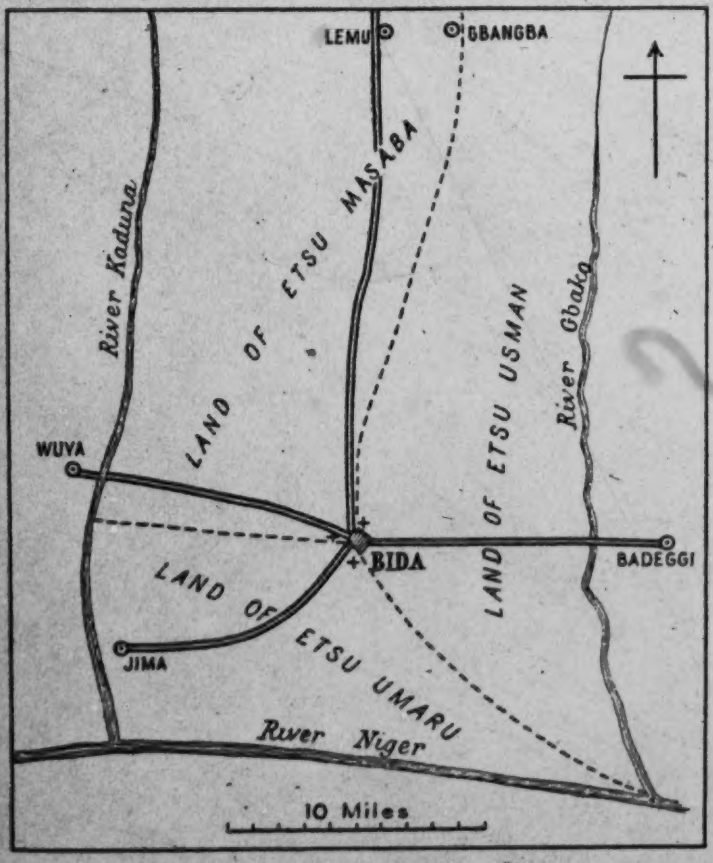
Masaba from Rabá, and the king had to seek refuge in Ilorin. Umar Bahaushe, for some time undisputed master of Nupe, attempted to make himself *Etsu* Nupe. All Fulani rallied against him, Usman Zaki and

SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE DIVISION OF ROYAL LAND



+..... Royal Estates *(esoži)*

Umaru Majigi returned from Gwandu, their self-chosen place of exile, and joined forces with Masaba against the usurper. For three years the Bornu general drove the Fulani armies before him and beat them in battle after battle. At last the luck turned. The Fulani army under Umaru, son of Majigi, fleeing from the usurper's army across the Kaduna river, found protection in the walled town of Bida. With the arrival of Masaba's troops from the south, and with the assistance of

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175 the town-king of Bida and the twelve Beni towns whose confederacy is brought into play for the last time in Nupe history, Umar Bahaushe's army was defeated after a three months' siege of Bida. The rebel general was killed, and when the *Dayspring* reached Rabá, in 1857, Dr. Baikie saw the head of the unfortunate Umar Bahaushe impaled at the landing-place.[1]

Then came a time of comparative peace. Bida became the centre of the new kingdom. Usman Zaki, now reinstated, was the first *Etsu* Nupe to reside there. He died in 1859 or 1860, and was succeeded by Masaba, whose second reign lasted till 1873. Under his rule Bida was transformed from a huge war-camp into a capital worthy of the most powerful kingdom of Central Nigeria. Many great buildings in Bida date from this time: the three royal palaces, the great mosque, and the lay-out of the night market. Masaba, suppressing revolts of the Gbedegi in Mokwa, of the riverain Kyedye, fighting wars against the Kukuruku, Kakanda and Bassa Nge in the south, and Gbari and Agaie Fulani in the east, consolidated the country internally and expanded its boundaries farther and farther afield. Of the two descendants of the original Nupe dynasty, one, Yisa, of Jimada stock, had fought on the side of the Fulani against the usurper Umar Bahaushe, and had then settled, half guest, half hostage, in Bida. The other, the descendant of Majiya, after having revolted, in vain, several times, fled again to the refuge of his father, Zuguma, in Kontagora. In *Etsu* Masaba's time, Nupe kingdom is said to have stretched from Mulye and Awawu, in Ebe country, in the north, to Akpara in Bunu in the south, and from half Yoruba Tsaragi (Shari) in the west, to Payi, in Gbari, in the east.[2] After Masaba's death Umaru, the son of Majigi, became *Etsu*. He reigned from 1873 till 1884. He is said to have been a fanatic Mohammedan, and he, too, helped to extend the boundaries of Nupe kingdom. He fought against Bunu and Gbira—and in this fight used for the first time gunpowder bought from the first Niger Company trading-post which had newly been established in Eggá, on the Niger. He quelled a revolt of the Kusopa under a chief from Yeti who joined forces with the exiled Nupe king of Zuguma, and another rising of the Kyedye. In this fight he had the help of the Kakanda, now tributary to the Nupe, and of the Niger Company troops which then for the first time played an active part in Nupe politics.

Etsu Maliki, who succeeded Umaru Majigi, reigned from 1884 to 1895. He is said to have been the wealthiest *Etsu* of Nupe, but (which means, perhaps, the same) avaricious and cruel. Under his reign taxes reached an almost insufferable height. His reign was on the whole peaceful except for the usual border raids and punitive expeditions against recalcitrant vassal tribes. Abubakari, 1895–7, followed. It was under his reign that the Niger Company troops were fighting against the

[1] A. C. G. Hastings, *The Voyage of the 'Dayspring'*. London, 1926, p. 90.

[2] About that time Dr. Barth, travelling in Hausa, was told of the great warlike kingdom of Nupe, whose boundaries he records; they are almost exactly the boundaries given above: Faže (in Ebe) in the north, Bunu country in the south, Tsaragi in the west, and Liffe (?) in Oban, in the east. (Henry Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, London, 1857, vol. iv, Appendix V, p. 545.)

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Nupe, finally taking Bida, in 1897, deposing *Etsu* Abubakari and appointing Mohamadu in his place. 175

The story of the Niger Company campaign has been often written. Between 1870 and 1890 the Royal Niger Company had established trading-posts all along the river, its northernmost posts being situated on Nupe territory. Shortly after the accession of Abubakari trouble broke out in the south of Nupe kingdom, in what is to-day Kabba Province, where the Yagba and Gbira had revolted against Nupe suppression. The Niger Company, which had many important trading-posts in this part of the country, promised them protection from Bida. *Etsu* Abubakari, no friend of the white man, decided to kill two birds with one stone, to 'pacify' Kabba country and to oust the hated Europeans. He moved his army south, under the command of *Makũ* Mohamadu. But the latter, who nursed a grievance against the *Etsu* for having refused his claim to the title of Heir Presumptive, made a pact with the British; in exchange for the promise of Sir William Wallace, who commanded the Niger Company troops, to make him *Etsu* of Nupe, he agreed to keep his army out of the fight. The Kyedye, always ready to revolt against the central government, manned their canoes, placed them at the disposal of the Niger Company and, under the command of a gunboat, undertook to guard the river so that no reinforcements should reach the beleaguered capital. The Niger Company troops marched on a city depleted of soldiers and arms. After twelve days' fighting the stubborn resistance of Bida was broken. Abubakari was deposed, and Mohamadu, Sir William Wallace's ally, appointed *Etsu*. The chief of the Kyedye was rewarded with the grant of the semi-independent status which his country had lost under the Fulani, and was placed directly under the authority of the Niger Company (a prerogative which was later withdrawn). Moreover, acceding to the request of the Kyedye chief, Patigi, the territory on the southern bank of the Niger opposite the Kyedye capital Muregi, was detached from Bida and given, as a separate Emirate, to Idirisu, the exiled Nupe king of the Jimada branch, who had been living in Bida as the 'guest' (hostage, in reality) of the Fulani kings.

The Niger Company and later its successor, the Government of Northern Nigeria, continued for some time this policy of breaking up the too dangerous big Nupe kingdom. Kolo Yisa, a grandson of the exiled Majiya, had thought of using the defeat of Bida for his own ends. He hurried to Zuguma, where his ancestors had lived as puppet kings of Bida, made himself king over the territory, and was later confirmed in this position by the Government. Yagba, Bunu, Bassa, and Kakanda had become independent districts and provinces immediately after the conquest of Bida. Now also the Nupe possessions on the southern and western bank of the Niger were taken away from Bida and placed in a different province, Ilorin, where they were divided up between the Emirs of Ilorin, Shonga, and Lafiagi (1900–5). Of the Nupe Empire that had reached from the Benue in the south to Gbagede in the north, only Bida Division remained, bordered on all sides by countries populated by Nupe, but ruled by different sovereigns.

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175 *Etsu* Abubakari, who had been banished to Lokoja after the conquest of Bida, made one attempt to return to his country and to recover throne and independence. He succeeded in collecting a following large enough to threaten Bida. He defeated *Etsu* Mohamadu and drove him from Bida (1906). But the British, by this time firmly established, helped Mohamadu, brought him back to Bida, and sent Abubakari back to Lokoja, where shortly afterwards he died in exile. Mohamadu died in 1914, succeeded by *Etsu* Bello, 1914–26, *Etsu* Mallam Saidu, 1926–34, and finally the present *Etsu*, Mallam Mohamadu Ndayako.

Viewing the historical growth of the Nupe Empire as a whole we discover the familiar two trends which, closely intertwined, force political systems into an endless twofold development: from expansion to military and political consolidation, in the course of which the necessity of further expansion seems invariably entailed. The roots of this development are no less evident in Nupe history than in the political developments of our own history. First, newly conquered territory demanded in due course conquest beyond its boundaries in order to ensure the pacification of the conquered areas and to prevent interference from tribes or states without. And second, the expanding territory absorbing more and more alien groups, all to be controlled and governed from a small nucleus-country, by a population less than one-fifth the size of the population that was brought under political control, necessitated continuous 're-conquests' and wars of consolidation. In the field of social organization this development becomes manifest in the rise of the feudal system; in the military sphere, in the ever-increasing employment of mercenary troops.

Not every step in the expansion of Nupe kingdom was carried out by war. There is evidence of peaceful expansion as well. Certain communities and tribal groups are said to have 'submitted' (*gba*) voluntarily to the Nupe state, accepting the position of tributary groups and claiming at the same time the political protection which the Nupe overlords extended to their subject groups. But accepting this 'protection' meant largely avoiding the more disastrous subjection. Though not the direct result of war and conquest, it was yet a submission to the threat of war and conquest which the momentum of a steadily expanding Nupe must have seemed to entail to her weaker neighbours.

To discover with equal certainty the first stimulus of the whole development, the force which, as it were, set the stone rolling, is impossible. The origin of Nupe rule and expansion is buried in the mythical past. Whether it was the immigration of a large tribal group (condensed in the myth to the small band of men round Tsoede) or a small *élite* of the kind Pareto likes to discover in every political achievement, we have no means of deciding. We do not even know what the original social structure and economic system of this immigrant group was, or whether it contained any stimulus to territorial expansion or conquest. Only in the Fulani conquest does this first 'stimulus' lie open to historical examination. We have described to some extent the gradual infiltration of Nupe by the Fulani, who came as herdsmen, mercenary soldiers, and Mohammedan preachers. Here a distinct tribal section, a semi-nomadic group on its

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wanderings from west to east and south-east, was the carrier of conquest. It was separated from the groups which it subjugated by ethnic descent and social structure, consisting apparently of a loose aggregate of kinship groups and self-constituted warlike bands, and only partly by its system of livelihood; for the predecessors of the Fulani, the Nupe rulers, had already been soldiers and had themselves evolved an urbanized civilization in which Mohammedan culture played its part. But the analysis of Fulani political history goes beyond the scope of this book.

We can study some of the stimuli which, though perhaps it did not initiate, yet certainly influenced and directed the political growth of Nupe. Limiting ourselves to the periods that come under the heading of 'real' history, we can point out the essential difference in the policy of expansion before and after the Fulani conquest. The expansion of the pre-Fulani kingdom appears to have been most marked in the north, and of the Fulani era, in the south. Tsoede's grave, symbolic to all Nupe kings of what we might call his 'political testament', lies in Gbagede, 100 miles north of their northernmost capital, Rabá. The Fulani Emirs, on the other hand, drove their armies farther and farther south; only in recent times, less than two generations ago, did they begin to 'consolidate' the Gbari provinces, thirty or forty miles north of Bida. The conquest of the northern territories, inhabited by primitive pagans who possessed no handicrafts or remarkable wealth, had evidently two main aims (apart from the necessity of pacifying the border countries): first, to tap the rich, easily accessible reservoir of slaves which the Nupe found among these primitive and poorly protected groups; and second, to protect and attract the trade from the wealthy centres of civilization in the Hausa states. Of this latter aim we have concrete proof. The main trade-routes from Hausa passed through, and partly ended in, Nupe, crossing on their way the territories of unruly hostile tribes. Rabá was the goal of the huge caravans that carried regularly *kanwa* (potash) from Lake Chad over Kano to the countries of the south.[1] When the first European explorers, in the times of the last indigenous Nupe kings, reached Nupe country and Rabá, they found it a town rich in cattle (the humped, northern, breed), horses, camels, and ostriches—which must all have come from the north—and the markets full of precious goods from Hausa, Bornu, and North Africa.[2]

The turning to the south represents a new political interest, bound up with a later phase in the history of West Africa. Fulani-Nupe, as the southern outpost of the Fulani Empire, carried its wars of expansion into the pagan south and no longer into the northern countries which had come under the sovereignty of various Fulani potentates to whom Nupe was tied by common allegiance. The south offered, over and above new densely populated areas for slave raiding, the command of the main route for the slave-trade, down the river to the coast whence ships took the slaves to foreign ports. Not until the Fulani subjugated the Kakanda

[1] See Barth, op. cit. ii, p. 115.

[2] See J. and R. Lander: Rabá had large herds of 'horned cattle remarkable for size and beauty' and a 'prodigious number of excellent horses' (op. cit. ii, pp. 312–13).

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175 tribe could Nupe canoes, with slaves and various goods, travel unmolested between Nupe and Lokoja and Onitsa, having had, before then, to stop at Eggā and to tranship their loads to Kakanda boats.[1] The highly developed trades and crafts of the south, capable of supplementing the northern trade, proved another attraction to a kingdom that had grown rich and fastidious. We have heard of the Yoruba slaves imported by the Fulani *Etsu* Masaba because of their skill in weaving and dyeing. Finally, the south became of paramount importance as the main door to European imports. This importance reached its climax when *Etsu* Umaru bought gunpowder for his long-barrelled flintlock guns of Arab pattern from the store of the Niger Company on his territory—north and south matched again in most profitable manner.

Our sketch of the growth of this West African kingdom has shown political expansion dominated by economic interests. If other motives—a collective desire for military adventures and glory—were decisive in shaping it, tney are now invisible in the historical perspective. The impetus of religious zeal, which drove the Fulani armies across Northern Nigeria, was spent when, as rulers of Nupe, the Fulani turned their faces southward. I will not pursue farther this question of political philosophy, of the ultimate stimulus behind political expansion. But we shall see that economic considerations were involved in the building and maintenance of the kingdom in many other, more subtle, ways. The incentive of gain will appear not only as an abstract, impersonal, historical stimulus, but as a concrete element, directly affecting individual action and directly shaping the motives and interests by which the individual agents of the political system are animated.

[1] See *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 170, n. 1.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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CHAPTER VII
POLITICAL HISTORY OF NUPE KINGDOM
(*continued*)

KINGSHIP

IN the tradition of Tsoede, that 'mythical charter' of Nupe kingdom, the essence of the Nupe state is already clearly expressed, sanctioned, almost sanctified, by that paramount authority that attaches to prehistoric events: it outlines a system of political domination, growing by conquest and expansion, and governed by a group detached in origin and status from the rest of the population, and claiming its supreme position by the right of might. The small river kingdom which figures, in the Tsoede tradition, as the nucleus of the great Nupe of later times, and the vast empire under the Fulani Emirs, are essentially of the same nature. The twofold process of expansion over alien groups and cultures, combined with cultural assimilation and absorption, is reflected in both, in the ideological history of the Tsoede myth as well as in the 'real' history of the Fulani kingdom. In one there is Tsoede, who conquers Nupe with the help of alien magic, who brings into Nupe the insignia of alien rulership and culture, but who, himself half Nupe by descent, creates a new, independent, and united Nupe. In the other there is this remarkable piece of empire-policy when Masaba claims succession to the Nupe throne on the grounds of his being half Nupe by birth and full Nupe by education. If the mythology of Tsoede establishes the essence and growth of kingship, later history shows its vicissitudes involved in such system of domination which forces unity upon heterogeneous groups and cultures, revolts and feuds, kings deposed and exiled, usurpers and shadow kings.

We know little about the system of kingship in pre-Fulani times. I have mentioned one piece of information already which I obtained from various sources, namely, the ancient rule of succession which made the eldest son 'born in the purple', that is, the son first born during the father's reign, the heir to the throne of Nupe. A few other facts concerning the person of the king I was able to ascertain from the *Etsu* of Patigi. Certain ritual rules obtained at the king's court—and some of these rules are still observed in Patigi. Thus the *Etsu* may only wear white; he can travel and go out whenever he likes, but may not eat any food save that prepared by his wives; nor may any stranger watch him eat. Finally, no one may be killed in the presence of the king or in the town in which he is residing.[1]

[1] This helps us to understand the organization of the 'King's Hangmen', the crucial fact of which was that the royal executioners killed their victims in places far away from the king's capital. Another effect of this observance, which is still visible, is the rule which forbids the performance of the *ndakó gboyá*, a cult believed to lead to the death of witches, in Patigi, the present 'king's town', or anywhere within a distance from which 'the shrieking of the spirit could be heard in Patigi'. (See *Man*, 1935, 173.)

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TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN AND HISTORY[1]

173 The Nupe kingdom was, according to their own traditions, founded by the culture hero Tsoede or Edegi, born, according to the genealogies of the Nupe kings, early in the 15th century when the Nupe were grouped in various small chieftainships subject to the *Ata* of Igala at Idah, to whom an annual tribute of slaves, traditionally sisters' sons, had to be paid. The son of the *Ata* at this time went hunting in Nupe country, fell in love with a chief's daughter, lived with her for some time, and she became pregnant. On the death of his father the son returned to Idah to succeed but he left a chain and a ring with the woman to give to their child when it was born. This child was Tsoede, who, when he was 30 years old, was sent to Idah by his mother's brother as part of the slave tribute. He enjoyed considerable favour and success at his father's court but was eventually forced to flee because of the jealousy of his half-brothers. He travelled upstream in a bronze canoe to his own country and after many adventures established himself as king of the Nupe.

Tsoede is held to have introduced the arts of iron and brass working and the practice of human sacrifices. He died at the reputed age of 120, on one of his military expeditions to the north in which direction the Nupe kingdom was then expanding. Some of his belongings, two stirrups and a sword, are still treasured by the people of Gbagede, who are not Nupe but Kamberi.[2]

175 The first Nupe king to become a Moslem is thought to have reigned about 1770. The Nupe kingdom reached the height of its power during the periods when the *Etsu* Ma'azun was on the throne (1759–67 and 1778–95).

After the Fulani conquered the Hausa states of Northern Nigeria in the Jihad of 1805, the Nupe came under the domination of the dynasty of the Emir of Gwandu. About 1810 Mallam Dendo, a Fulani from Kebbi, who was to play an important part in its history, appeared in Nupe country as an itinerant preacher, diviner, and charm seller. He gathered around him a following of cattle Fulani, Hausa and Fulani mercenaries, merchants and priests. Taking advantage of the dissensions which broke out after *Etsu* Ma'azun's death, he established himself as a military leader. The Nupe kingdom was at this time split into two halves, with *Etsu* Jimada ruling at Gbara, the ancient capital, and *Etsu* Maija at the newly built capital of Raba on the Niger. Maija gained the support of Mallam Dendo and his followers and attacked *Etsu* Jimada, routing his forces and killing him. Eventually, however, fearing that Mallam Dendo might become a dangerous rival, he drove him from his territory across the Niger into the Yoruba country of Ilorin, and later made war against him and the ruling Fulani in Ilorin. Here Maija was defeated and driven back into the interior of Nupe country, leaving Raba open to Mallam Dendo who established himself there as ruler over the Nupe.

After his death in 1833 Dendo's second son Usman Zaki succeeded him and the old Nupe dynasty, exiled to Zugurma, abandoned all claim to the rulership. For some 10 years there were constant intrigues and quarrels among the sons of Mallam Dendo, and wars against other tribes. Usman Zaki renounced the throne in 1841 but reoccupied it in 1850. Bida then became the centre of the new kingdom in a period of comparative peace.

Between 1870 and 1890 the Niger Company established trading posts along the Niger. They, and later the Government of Nigeria, detached outlying portions of the kingdom. The Yagba and Bunu Yoruba, Gbari, Basa, and Kakanda became independent in 1900–05; the territories on the south and west banks of the Niger were taken away and given to the Emirs of Ilorin, Shonga, Lafiagi, and Pategi; the northern Nupe territories came under the Emir of Kontagora, and only Bida Division remained of the former Nupe kingdom. As a result of this fragmentation there are now groups of Nupe in areas under non-Nupe chiefs.

[1] For fuller accounts of Nupe history see Temple, 1919, pp. 334–8; Nadel, 1942, pp. 73–86; Harmon-Hodge, 1929, pp. 103–10.

[2] According to Nadel. But Mathews (MS, 1938) describes them as "pagan Nupe."